



# **CLD Standards Council Scotland Report**

Members Response  
to

Scottish Government  
Post School Education, Skills and Research  
Purpose and Principles Interim Paper  
March 2023

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## Introduction

Scottish Government have conducted a number of educational reviews across 2022/2023 into the future of Scottish Education with the aim of hearing from the widest possible range of voices and views. This consultation on the Interim Purpose and Principles for Post School Education, Skills and Research is one of these.

The CLD Standards Council would like to take the opportunity of this consultation on the Interim Purpose and Principles for Post School Education, Skills and Research to raise and promote the lifelong learning landscape, and highlight that skills delivery is critical for all ages and stages of learning. We want to emphasise the role and agility of Community Learning and Development practitioners and the organisations who support and offer learning opportunities to Scotland's learners and communities all year, formal, informal and non-formal.

We recognise that there is common ground as well as robust partnerships between traditional education establishments such as Schools, Colleges, Universities, and CLD in terms of values, outcomes and practice methods. The CLD Standards Council strongly believes that CLD, as part of the Post School Education, Research and Skills ecosystem, has a critical role regards decision making which impacts education and learning opportunities for all of Scotland's learners. We believe that it is vital that Scottish Government is clear and consistent in its message regards recognising education in Scotland is for all learners at all ages and stages in life, life wide and lifelong, and the CLD is critical in the delivery and support of that learning.

For the purpose of this report, we will use the term CLD practitioner in reference to CLD practitioners in all sectors and settings.

This report is based on data gathered through our members. The CLD Standards Council held four online focus groups with CLD practitioners from Higher and Further Education (HE & FE), Local Authority, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations, and CLD Students. This was to ensure the variety of sectors within CLD education delivery was represented in this report. The digital tool Padlet was used to share information, structure conversations during the sessions and capture dialogue. These are attached as pdf appendices and have also been submitted via email to the Purpose and Principles team. CLD Standards Council members attended voluntarily and were given links to the Scottish Governments Post-school education, research and skills: interim purpose and principles website. Participants were asked to offer feedback on the language used for each principle, as well as the relevance of the five principles and the overarching purpose. Kim McLaren from Scottish Government Purpose and Principles team attended all four online focus group consultations to support the dialogue and answer practitioner questions.

We firmly believe that the post school education, research and skills ecosystem, along with Scottish Government, includes colleges, universities, community learning and development (CLD), apprenticeships, third sector and employer-led training. Research is also fundamental to progress the innovative new thinking, the structures and learning opportunities that helps to drive our society nationally and internationally.

“In Scotland, just as in much of the world, education is valued as a fundamental human right and public good, bringing benefits to society and individuals. Scotland's National Performance

Framework describes our vision for Education and ensuring we are all well-educated, skilled and able to contribute to society:

*“We have an education system we can all take part in, and which inspires us to reach our potential whatever that may be. We understand that the desire to learn continues throughout life and that being curious, creative, skilled and knowledgeable is good for us, our society and economy. We value our teachers, educators and academics and do all we can to achieve the highest standards across our learning and research. We work with partners in business, industry, science and academia to ensure we led the world in new thinking and have the talents and abilities to flourish in future.”*

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/post-school-education-research-and-skills-interim-purpose-and-principles/pages/overview/#driversforchange>

Education does not take place only in schools; nor do children and young people learn in schools in isolation from the educational opportunities that happens elsewhere, involving them, their families and the communities they are part of. Recognition of this should be an essential starting point for any education consultations and reform, to which CLD practitioners can make a major contribution. Every local authority in Scotland must secure and co-ordinate the provision of CLD activities (The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2013/175/introduction/made>). HMIE reports consistently rate and recognise the powerful impact of CLD provided by a range of agencies mainly across the public and third sector: [Inspection reports | Education Scotland](#)

[Education: improvement framework and plan - 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/achieving-excellence-equity-2023-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/>

The CLD sector is an integral part of Scottish education, ensuring individuals, families and communities across Scotland reach their potential through lifelong learning, mutual self-help and community organisations - and that the available support and opportunities are community-led, built around people's aspirations and community's needs. The purpose of CLD is to empower people, individually and collectively, to make positive changes in their lives and in their communities, **through learning**. Scotland's National Performance Framework sets out the strategic objectives for those delivering CLD:

1. improved life chances for people of all ages, through learning, personal development and active citizenship.
2. stronger, more resilient, supportive, influential and inclusive communities.

CLD is delivered in diverse settings and sectors, by practitioners with a wide variety of job titles and volunteer roles, working with people of all ages. This includes (but is not necessarily limited to –

- Community Development (building the capacity of communities to meet their own needs, engaging with and influencing decision makers).
- Youth Work, family learning and other early intervention work with children, young people and families.
- Community-based Adult Learning, including adult literacies and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

- Learning for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the community, for example, people with disabilities, care leavers or offenders.
- Working with individuals and communities to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Volunteer development.
- Learning support and guidance in the community.

<https://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/>

The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 place duties on local authorities to work with partners and communities to co-produce and secure the delivery of Community Learning and Development in their area and publish a 3-yearly plan.

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/community-learning-and-development-planning-2021-2024/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/cld-plans-guidance-note/>

#### Assumptions:

It is important to recognise that this member response report provides an insight into the experiences and views of respondents who attended the four online consultation focus groups. Whilst this data gives an insight into the CLD Standards Council members views, these results are not representative of the entire CLD sector or CLD Standards Council membership.

## Key Points from Members of the CLD Standards Council regarding the Interim Purpose and Principles for Post School Education, Research and Skills Development

### LANGUAGE USED WITHIN THE INTERIM PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES.

Across the four focus groups there was a consensus that there are a significant number of words and phrases used which are open to misinterpretation, do not offer a clear meaning, or is language that both learners and people working or volunteering within this education system may not understand.

There was an agreement with regards to ensuring this policy being equitable and inclusive, and a call for policy makers to ensure the use of words that are meaningful, easy to understand and clear to interpret. Members felt strongly about the critical importance of ensuring that everyone would understand the purpose and principles for post school education, skills and research. From 15/16-year-old school leavers to people returning to learning later in life, to students at all levels in Higher and Further Education, and to all community learners needing to connect to a positive experience, as well as the vast array of educators that learners may engage with throughout their lifetime of learning.

Whilst members understood the desire for the document, and the principles, to be succinct, they often felt this was to the detriment of reader, specifically when “collective” terms were used (such as Ecosystem). It was felt that all principles would benefit from being opened up and more descriptive, perhaps listing or giving more detail, and therefore explained clearly.

Some of the other language discussed with regards to being misleading, incorrect or not easily understood by all were:

- Agile;
- Collaborates;
- Economy;
- Ecosystem;
- Equitable;
- High quality;
- Journey;
- Time and place;
- Targeted and
- Wellbeing Economy.

It was suggested that accessing advice from the Plain English Campaign may be beneficial.

<https://www.plainenglish.co.uk/> . It was also recommended that language decided on be tested by both low-level literacy learners, to gauge understanding, as well as ESOL learners and translators to ensure how the intent of the words used carries over into the languages recognised to be the main immigrant or foreign languages used in Scotland’s communities (e.g.: Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindu, Punjabi, Polish, Spanish, Urdu).

<https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/census-results/at-a-glance/languages/>. Discussions were

had around there being an easy read version, but it was considered that the main document should still be written in a way that was accessible and understandable to people with all levels of literacy.

### **Principle One: High Quality**

**High quality opportunities are available for people to enhance their knowledge and skills at the time and place that is right for them.**

There was agreement across all four focus groups that principle one is important, relevant and should be included, but there was considerable discussion around a number of issues that would come under this aim.

#### Key Points:

- Limited funding and resources negatively impact therefore high quality is irrelevant when opportunities are limited and not suited to the need of the learner or community.
- Legislative and safeguarded funding specifically for Community Learning and Development across Scotland, to raise its profile, embed provision, and secure high quality and consistent opportunities and delivery.
- Equity of provisions and funding. Some colleges and institutions collaborate, others do not. Robust governance needed or new funding system which enables students to access the same support if part time or full time.
- Parity of esteem regards recognition of qualifications at all SCQF levels, and recognition of the diversity of learning opportunities that exist, including volunteering and experiential learning.
- Apprenticeship age limits extended to enable adults to access funding and opportunities.
- Flexible pathways and recognition of prior learning, not matter how long ago, to enable learners to manoeuvre in and out to suit family and personal circumstances, with articulation and progression routes across all provision.

### **Principle Two: Supportive and Equitable**

**People are supported throughout their learning journey, targeting those who need it most.**

There was agreement across all four focus groups that principle two is critical, relevant and that a version of this principle should be included however there was considerable discussion around targeting and how can the system ensure equitable support.

#### Key Points:

- Guidance. A need for a comprehensive adult careers guidance and advice service which includes in-person work. This is especially important for those seeking to re-join the labour market, upskill or progress to further study. People need to know what support is available to them.
- Recognition that community learning and development already supports post school learners, from offering learning opportunities through to study skills and personal

development support when it is not available directly through the learning provider. It was agreed that acknowledgment and secure funding of CLD as a core service within Scottish Education would improve learners' engagement, progression and success at all levels of post school education, skills and research.

- Targeting. Negative connotations. Often those most vulnerable who need support engage better in universal learning opportunities rather than being singled out and targeted. Using CLD approaches and learner centred opportunities supports those who need it most, and work well when relationships with learners, families, communities are already there. This is often because of the CLD practitioners and services are known and trusted in those communities. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student-centered\\_learning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student-centered_learning)
- Funding. Stability in funding is required. Current insecurity of short-term funding does not lend itself to sustainable learning opportunities or building trusting relationships within communities and with employers.

### **Principle Three: Globally Respected**

**Research, teaching, innovation and knowledge exchange undertaken in Scotland, must be impactful; enhance and contribute to global wellbeing, addressing 21st. Century challenges and attracting inward investment and talent to study, live and work in Scotland.**

There was mixed feedback regarding principle three, with discussions regarding its relevance and how Scotland's economies work together at varying levels. There was agreement regards the necessity for getting it right nationally first and the need to look outward to learn from other countries, alongside discussions that global recognition benefits economy.

#### Key Points:

- CLD is leading the way regards its approaches, delivery and outcomes in Scotland as well as having the only professional body for Community Learning and Development in the world, yet still not fully recognised or supported by funded legislation in our own country.
- Infrastructure for funding, supporting and publishing research needs to improve in Scotland first, to begin to achieve recognition globally.
- A greater need to CLD research to focus on Scotland to inform policy development and practice.
- Key need for parity of esteem regards funding and infrastructure to support CLD research, with other professions.

### **Principle Four: Agile and Responsive**

**Everybody in the ecosystem collaborates and delivers in the best interests of Scotland's wellbeing economy.**

Discussions regarding the language of principle four was had by all focus groups, with all strong agreement that terminology such as agile and responsive, wellbeing economy and ecosystem need to be clarified and simply explained. There was an understanding regards the necessity for

this principle and the importance of secure funding and infrastructure to enable the flexibility to achieve it.

**Key Points:**

- Current lack of qualified CLD practitioners and aging workforce, as well as confused professional pathways into this profession needs to be addressed for this principle to be realised.
- Need for parity of esteem across educational sectors, educators and qualification levels.
- The development of a cohesive infrastructure with regards to communication, funding and collaborative working across all involved is critical. This should include local authority, third sector and employers, and ensure learner's voice.
- Skills for learning, life and work are required to be at the heart of all learning opportunities, and not be driven by employability or mandatory learning programmes.

### **Principle Five: Transparent, Resilient and Trusted**

**The ecosystem is well governed, financially and environmentally resilient and trusted to deliver.**

There was agreement across all four focus groups that principle five is crucial but there was extensive discussion around a number of concerns, including the need for explanation of language used for this principle.

**Key Points:**

- Importance of knowing communities. Educators like CLD practitioners should be empowered to lead from their place of professional knowledge with regards grassroots community requirements.
- Simplification of SQA qualification and assessment processes to enable them to be tailored to learners and communities' needs.
- CLD requires to be appropriately funded in order to contribute effectively to the post-16 learning system. It is not possible to offer a resilient service with clarity on the funding available.
- Accessibility regards knowledge and paperwork around student funding, with improved communication and support. Needs to be simplified as well as better infrastructure so learners and families can access funding, which in turn offers funding to the provider.
- CLD as a professional needs recognition, parity of esteem in the ecosystem and safeguarded like other educators within the system, with an explicit guaranteed budget from government.

### **Additional.**

**Key Points:**

- Language: if principles are difficult for English speaking people to understand or misinterpret, then how can we expect those for whom English is a second language to be involved?



- Student Funding should be examined with regards to an individual's human rights and be based on the person learning, not linked to others in the household or who are related or deemed to be responsible.
- Experiential learning and informal learning are critical to lifelong and life wide learning.
- There is nothing in these principles about consultation, and about the importance of learner voice. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/FUTL80/FUTL80.pdf>  
<https://www.learnvoiceframework.org.uk/>
- The forthcoming review of CLD Regulations 2013 is critical to strengthen support for the sector and safeguard its place in this ecosystem, highlighting and connecting the 3 areas of practice: Youth Work, Adult Learning and Community Development.
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2013/175/introduction/made>
- Adult Learning should be recognised as a major part of Post School Education and the current Adult Learning strategy should be strengthened and funded.
- Flexibility regards when a young person can access "Post School" learning opportunities. School doesn't work for everyone, CLD options available earlier so young people stay engaged and move into positive post school opportunities.
- Recognition and value of volunteers within CLD and post school education, with security of training and funding needed to support them.

## Appendixes

High and Further Education Practitioners Padlet:

<https://padlet.com/kirstygemmellcdsc/he-fe-purpose-and-principles-23-02-24-px878nnfc1pa6l2k>

Local Authority Practitioners Padlet:

<https://padlet.com/kirstygemmellcdsc/local-authority-purpose-and-principles-23-03-01-azfh4uvafs3hdndk>

Voluntary and Charitable Organisations Practitioners Padlet:

<https://padlet.com/kirstygemmellcdsc/charitable-orgs-volunteers-purpose-and-principles-23-03-02-owmo8deg2wo3b44j>

CLD Students Padlet:

<https://padlet.com/kirstygemmellcdsc/student-purpose-and-principles-23-03-03-vufhcebo1rug02a1>